

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**1115/02, 1120/02
1123/02**

Paper 2

May/June 2004

1 hour 30 minutes

INSERT

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for comprehension.

The passage describes how the writer, Mark, achieves his ambition of buying an elephant and setting out on a journey with her, along with his companions, Aditya and Salim.

- 1 'Am I right in assuming that you want to buy an elephant?' A voice from India shouted down the telephone to me in Hong Kong. It was my friend Aditya. Even through the hiss and crackle of the telephone, I could detect the disbelief in his voice about my strange wish.
'Yes, that's right,' I replied. 5
'You must be mad,' he said. 'But I'll see what I can do.'
- 2 Within a few days I was in India at Aditya's house. There, waiting for me, was an acquaintance of his, Salim, who had a deep knowledge of wildlife and, more importantly, was an expert on elephants. 'Orissa, the old kingdom of Kalinga,' Salim said, studying the map, 'is where you should go to buy an elephant, and to begin your journey. For centuries the rulers there reckoned part of their wealth in elephants.' 10
- 3 So next morning we set off. By coincidence the director of the zoo in Orissa was on our flight. But he gave us depressing news. He knew of no elephants for sale in Orissa. When we touched down, my gloomy mood deepened. It was monsoon time and an oppressive heat hung in the air. We checked into our hotel and followed the porter to our rooms. Before we could get inside, the porter suddenly asked us if we wanted to buy an elephant. I didn't ask him how on earth he knew that. Aditya whispered to me 'Don't forget the zoo director is staying here too. News travels fast in hotels.' Sure enough, the porter informed us there was a village nearby where elephants for sale could be found. We made our way there as quickly as possible. 15
- 4 There, in the fading light, were three elephants. One caught my eye immediately, a female, looking so good-natured that I was sure she was the one for me. The other two elephants were males and, Salim warned, looked dangerous. Take the female, he advised me, it would be impossible to find better. After some bargaining, I proudly possessed my very own elephant, to me the queen of elephants. And that would be her name: Queen. My dream of travelling in India on an elephant was about to come true. We then planned our route – our destination was a town some sixty days' journey away – and assembled the equipment we would need, not forgetting the 'bombs'. These are objects the size of golf-balls which, when thrown on the ground, explode like some powerful firework and are used to scare off threatening animals. With the equipment slung over Queen's back, we began our travels. 20
- 5 As we were reaching the outskirts of the village, I saw a bus approaching us. Queen swerved abruptly, causing the collapse of a tea-stall. We came to a halt amongst a cascading river of cups and teapots. Glaring at us, his face a mottled purple, was the enraged owner. 25
'Er ... I'm frightfully sorry, sir,' I gasped. 'You see my ...'
'You! you!' the man shouted furiously. 'Everything gone, I'm ruined, I'll take you to court.' 30
'Now, sir,' Aditya said. 'There's no need for that. I am sure we can come to some financial agreement.' After the man had cooled down, we assessed the damage and compensation was paid. We couldn't get out of that village quickly enough; the drain on my nerves and on my pocket had been considerable. Besides, Queen unashamedly kept on helping herself to the cakes which were laid out on some market stalls. Understandably her greed annoyed the owners and Salim would smack her trunk, whereupon she would squeeze her small brown eyes shut like a naughty little girl. 35
- 6 Eventually, we emerged into open countryside, and to our relief followed a track free of the din of traffic and the possibility of Queen's thieving. After a while we noticed that Queen was limping, a bad sign for our future progress, let alone Queen's 40 45 50

comfort. Salim discovered the cause – a metal leg chain with small spikes that had obviously been used on her by her previous owners. One of the spikes had caused an ulcer, but, Salim told me, hot-water and salt dressings applied nightly would cure it. Although his knowledge of elephant ailments reassured me, it took some time to make and apply these dressings.

- 7 Days passed and our journey continued. Queen plodded along, her trunk plucking at branches from overhead trees, munching with contentment. Nevertheless, it was evident that her leg was still troubling her. Soon we came to another little town. The animal doctor there explained that Queen had a serious infection, and that she would need injections of antibiotics. Moreover, this difficult task was to be mine – and I was distinctly uneasy about it. After mentally marking a spot in Queen's enormous side, I shut my eyes and nervously plunged in the needle. I realised my attempt had failed when, with a squeal of rage, Queen trundled away with a broken needle wobbling precariously out of her side. 60
- 'That was incorrect,' the vet remarked needlessly. 'Place the needle in straight. Now, we will try again.' 65
- 8 When Queen was brought back, she gave me a look of pure venom. I repeated the process, this time successfully. So off we went again, adding to our equipment a heavy box of needles and antibiotics. After some time we entered a forest which promised a welcome change of scenery. Queen suddenly stopped, extending her trunk upwards, scanning and smelling the air. 70
- 'Wild elephants,' Salim whispered, 'and very close.'
- 9 Aditya reached for his camera bag. With a sharp downward gesture of his hand Salim indicated to him to keep still. He knew that wild elephants can be very dangerous. Then from the corner of my eye I caught a slight movement. A soft sound, almost inaudible, was the only indication that the foliage was being gently brushed aside. Like ghosts, three female elephants appeared and stood motionless on the road in front of us. They let out a deep rumble and extended their trunks towards Queen. If they sensed our fear, would they attack us? Then, as quickly and quietly as they had appeared, they disappeared. 75
- 10 I was about to let out a sigh of relief when Salim gave another of his urgent hand signals. We heard a movement, as if the grass were being crushed by some huge, unidentified force. Suddenly a large male elephant with tusks a metre long confronted us. Queen was trembling violently and Salim was having trouble holding her steady. We were so close I could see the flies clustering around the elephant's eyes. Without warning he rapped his trunk on the ground, emitting a terrifying bellow. 80
- 11 'Quick,' Salim hissed. 'He's angry. Throw the bombs.' Aditya hurled one to the ground. Nothing happened. It failed to explode. The elephant stepped forward, throwing his trunk contemptuously into the air, emitting a terrible shrill trumpeting sound, as if warning us to keep our distance. It was so loud and enveloping that my senses reeled. 85
- 12 'Throw another, now!' I whispered, desperate that this one would work. But Salim moved first. He wrenched it from Aditya's hand, placed it on the ground and hit it hard with the end of his stick. There was a blinding flash, a puff of smoke, and when the smoke had cleared the track was empty. We could hear the elephants crashing through the trees. In that moment of silence, the primitive energy of that enormous male elephant vibrated in the emptiness around us. The silence of the forest was no longer tranquil. It had become threatening. We moved slowly forward until we could find a way out into safer open country beyond. I had learnt an important lesson – elephants are wild animals and deserve an appropriate respect. 95 100

(From 'Travels On My Elephant' by Mark Shand)

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